



Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Legal Office, 3 West Road, Virks Building, 4th floor, Cranston, RI 02920
phone: 401.462.2326 fax: 401.462.1678

August 20, 2018

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight
101 State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman Serpa:

Please accept the attached report as the State's most recent update on the RIBridges system, which covers the reporting period July 18, 2018 – August 16, 2018. This document provides monthly updates on the following topics:

- System performance and improvement;
- DHS staffing and employee training;
- Pending applications;
- SNAP timeliness and lobby/Call Center summary;
- CCAP off-cycle payments; and
- LTSS interim payments.

We appreciate your continued advocacy on behalf of those we serve and your interest in the health of the RIBridges system and the progress made to address outstanding issues. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Beane, Secretary



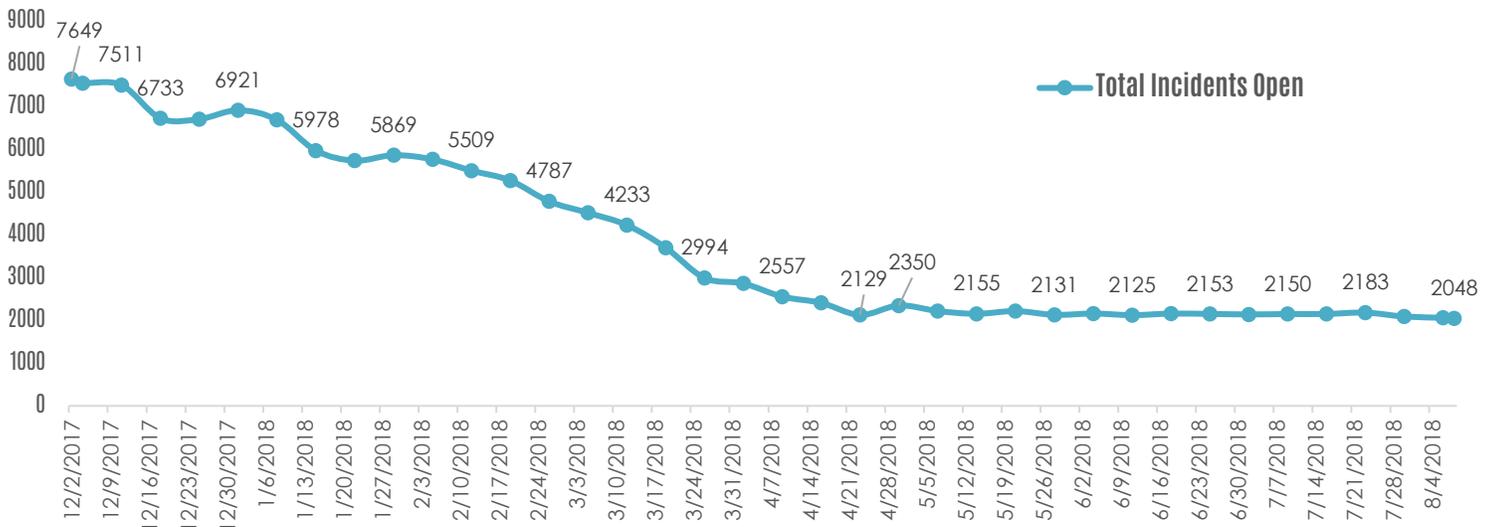
RI Bridges: Monthly Update

AUGUST 2018

The Executive Office of Health & Human Services coordinates and supports the delivery of programs and services across Rhode Island's health and human service agencies. Our team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life, and being there for Rhode Islanders when needed. Our oversight of work on RIBridges is an important part of the equation. Progress continues to be made on this system. As we move along, we will continue to put the pieces in place to ensure timely access to benefits for Rhode Islanders. This report provides an update on our efforts and progress to date.

SYSTEM PERFORMANCE + IMPROVEMENT

An important measure of system health and stability is the total number of incidents logged related to the RIBridges system. An incident accounts for any concern experienced in the system that needs to be investigated and, as needed, resolved. IT systems generally require updates and enhancements during their useful life, so an incident number will never hit zero. However, the incident count in RIBridges should gradually decline over time as the system is stabilized. The number of new and existing incidents logged into RIBridges continues to decline steadily. As of August 8, open incidents totaled 2,048.

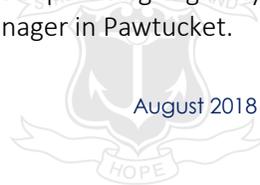


Worker Inbox Upgrade

Last month, a major system upgrade – known as a “release” – was completed, which introduced “Worker Inbox” functionality. This Inbox is a dashboard tool that allows staff to better and more quickly prioritize tasks and process applications. Previously, staff used manual lists to prioritize applications. Customers’ files are now bar-coded, allowing incoming paperwork to be scanned and tracked in the system. Staff report that with this new automated indexing system in place, a process that once took 45 minutes to complete now takes 10 minutes.

DHS STAFFING + TRAINING

DHS continues to make progress in strengthening its workforce. Since July, DHS hired 18 employees, with several slated to start in August or the beginning of September. This includes two senior casework supervisors to oversee Pawtucket and Middletown field offices, 11 customer service aides, two supervising eligibility technicians, two employment and career advisors dedicated to the RI Works program, and an office manager in Pawtucket.



We continue to work toward filling social caseworker positions to support the Long-Term Services and Supports unit, employment and career advisors, and completing customer service aide hires. At the same time, work is ongoing to staff supervisory positions, both in the field and in central management. There are seven social caseworker positions posted and three that are currently in the interviewing process.

Training Overview

Between July 16 and August 15, 2018, DHS' Center for Staff Development and Learning (CSDL) facilitated almost 200 hours of training, with more than 400 DHS staff participating. Trainings included:

- Able-Bodies Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Training (see: [federal rule change](#))
- Worker Inbox Training
- Elderly, Adults without Dependent Children, and Disabled Training
- Customer Service Aide Training

In addition, the CSDL piloted its new redesigned RI Works Training Curriculum for eligibility technicians with participants from the Fraud Unit and DHS employment and career advisors. The CSDL team also worked closely with consultants from the University of Rhode Island (URI) to pilot two soft-skills workshops: time management and customer service. Some 40 employees completed training as of August 15, 2018.

PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
SNAP Exp	17	46	63	19	29	48	111
SNAP Non	289	391	680	8	23	31	711
CCAP	12	216	228	2	3	5	233
GPA Burial	0	43	43	0	17	17	60
SSP	0	29	29	0	5	5	34
GPA	51	26	77	113	39	152	229
RIW	108	155	263	18	34	52	315
Undet. Cash	0	4	4	40	8	48	52
Undet. Med	9	391	400	44	228	272	672
MAGI	50	48	98	157	83	240	338
MPP	4	199	203	53	53	106	309
Complex Med.	18	46	64	126	234	360	424
LTSS	118	656	774	91	553	644	1,418
Totals	676	2,250	2,926	671	1,309	1,980	4,906

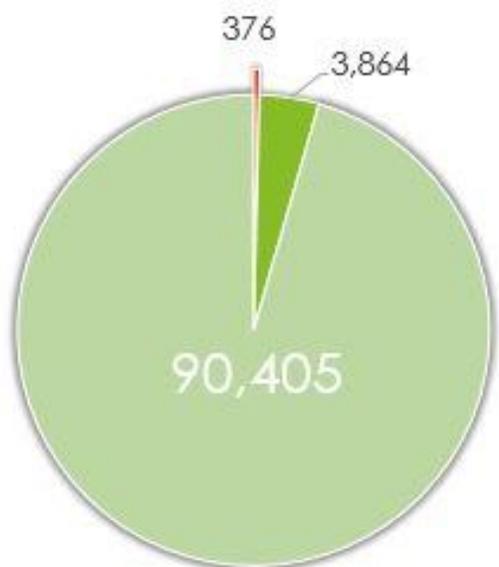
The number of pending new applications across all programs remains under 5,000 – the result of the priority the State continues to place on ensuring access to benefits along with a continued focus on system improvements and strengthening the DHS workforce.

As of August 16, 2018, the State saw a 14 percent decrease month-over-month in total overdue applications pending State action. Overdue pending applications awaiting State action total 1,309.



CUSTOMER SERVICE: SNAP TIMELINESS + LOBBY/CALL CENTER SUMMARY

DHS continues to make progress in improving customer service. For the month of July, combined timeliness for SNAP applications was 93.2 percent (93.2 percent for expedited and 93.2 percent for non-expedited). This is the fourth consecutive month of timeliness over 90 percent.



With the launch of the new Worker Inbox tool, the State anticipates SNAP timeliness may dip slightly in August to reflect the adjustment period for DHS staff. However, we are encouraged by the early progress we're seeing on the ground and anticipate the new tool, along with the State's efforts to strengthen the DHS workforce, will yield positive results.

In July, SNAP benefits were issued to more than 90,000 households. While the number of applications not processed timely represents less than 1 percent of the total SNAP population, the State remains focused on ensuring all customers receive timely access to benefits.

Lobby Improvements

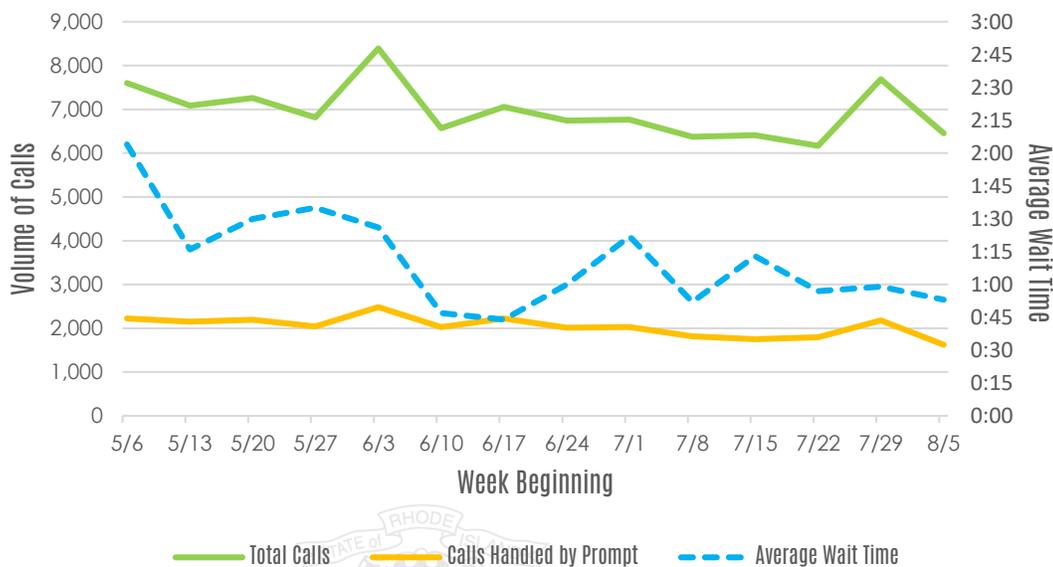
Recent lobby changes, including adding 13 new customer service windows and adjusting the footprint, have led to tangible progress, which was documented in a recent report from Public Consulting Group (PCG).

Untimely July Applications | Timely Applications | Total SNAP Population

According to its independent research and analysis, 85 percent of customers who walk into a DHS service center now wait less than 30 minutes – down from more than 45 minutes prior to the launch of RIBridges.

Call Center Progress

During the third week of July, the DHS Call Center hit a monthly low of just more than 6,000 calls – down from approximately 6,800 calls during the same week in the month prior. Average wait times continue to drop.



CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child-care providers since 7/5/18. (Note: Due to the 4th of July holiday, there was no Batch 2A).

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (2, 2B)	727	\$2.7 million
Off-Cycle (4A)	30	\$46,622
Providers Off-Cycle/Total	4.13%	NA
Payments Off-Cycle/Total	1.75%	NA

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (3, 3A, 3B)	740	\$2.8 million
Off-Cycle (3A & 3B)	52	\$80,310
Providers Off-Cycle/Total	7.03%	NA
Payments Off-Cycle/Total	2.87%	NA

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (4, 4A)	673	\$3.1 million
Off-Cycle (4A)	27	\$26,031
Providers Off-Cycle/Total	4.01%	NA
Payments Off-Cycle/Total	0.85%	NA

LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are 553 overdue LTSS applications pending State action. In July, through the contingency payment process, which ensures nursing and assisted-living facilities receive prompt reimbursement from the State, the State paid out \$4,093,524 (schedule attached). Our payment reconciliation process is ongoing.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS AND SPECIAL MASTER

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is an important partner to the State. We continue to meet regularly to review progress on RIBridges. Below is a list of federal correspondence during this reporting period.

- July 16, 2018: Correspondence from FNS regarding states' participation in SNAP State Plan of Operations
- July 20, 2018: Correspondence from FNS regarding the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) submitted to FNS on May 15, 2018
- July 24, 2018: Correspondence from FNS regarding DHS' response to the Civil Rights Compliance Review
- July 31, 2018: Correspondence from FNS regarding its review of our responses to conditions imposed on the FFY17 and FFY18 Quarter 1, 2 and 3 IAPD Update
- August 1, 2018: Ninth Special Master Report on DHS' SNAP timeliness and progress
- August 8, 2018: Correspondence from FNS regarding their review of Rhode Island's FFY18 SNAP operations
- August 15, 2018: July 2018 SNAP Application Timeliness Report, as part of Gemmell agreement